

MULE DEER WORKING GROUP
Directors Report - Mid-winter WAFWA
Las Vegas, NV January 10-11, 2015



Mule Deer Fact Sheets

Six Fact Sheets (#1-6) were completed last year and 7 more were approved for publication at the summer meeting in San Antonio. These 13 published Fact Sheets are being used by your agencies in many different venues and are also on the website for access by anyone. Besides open access on the internet in PDF form, we also have a separate set of high resolution printer-ready copies (with corner markings printers prefer). These printer copies are being used by agencies to print just the Fact Sheets they need or for use at a special events. The Mule Deer Foundation did all graphic layout for us free of charge and is publishing one fact sheet in each issue of their magazine. In addition, a limited run of Fact Sheets #1-6 were printed on high quality paper with financial support from Federal Premium Ammunition and distributed to attendees at the Mule Deer Foundation's "Western Hunting and Conservation Expo" in Salt Lake City last year. This is the ideal venue for these – hundreds of our hunting public were able to pick up a short and easily digested Fact Sheet about the topics that are of the highest interest to them.

Also provided at this meeting are first drafts of the next 2 Fact Sheets (#14-15) on Forestry Practices and Fertility Control. These are currently under internal review by the Mule Deer Working Group (MDWG). As with the others, they will then be sent out to external subject matter experts in other agencies and academia for additional review. We traditionally share even rough first drafts with the directors at meetings to allow for comments and guidance from the very beginning of the development of our documents. The remaining titles have designated authors and will be the next topics we work on. If you have a topic you don't see here, contact Jim Heffelfinger to see if it is already in the queue as an upcoming title.

1. *Predation COMPLETED*
2. *Winter Feedings COMPLETED*
3. *Highways COMPLETED*
4. *Elk/Mule Deer COMPLETED*
5. *Carrying Capacity COMPLETED*
6. *Antler Restrictions COMPLETED*
7. *Doe Harvest COMPLETED*
8. *Poaching COMPLETED*
9. *Urban Deer COMPLETED*
10. *Translocation COMPLETED*
11. *Diseases and Parasites COMPLETED w/Wildlife Health Committee*
12. *Migration Corridors COMPLETED*
13. *Fencing COMPLETED*
14. *Immunocontraception In Review*
15. *Forestry Practices In Review*
- XX. *Shed antler hunting In Preparation*
- XX. *Winter Range Disturbance In Preparation*

Mule Deer and Movement Barriers Document

Some MDWG members and other experts have been working on a document that will inform practitioners about this increasingly important issue, give an overview of the research that's been done, and provide suggested solutions based on what has worked on the ground. There is a lot of new information available in widely scattered documents and it is hard for those working on this issue to have the latest information. Our handbook will focus on pre-planning, implementation of solutions, and important post-project monitoring. Brian Wakeling (NV) is coordinating the effort and we expect to have a final draft for you to review before the summer meeting for possible approval at the summer meeting.

Rangewide Mule and Black-tailed Deer Status

Gerry Kuzyk (BC) has been the lead on a summary of the current status of mule and black-tailed deer from each representative of the 23 member agencies. This was provided at the summer meeting in San Antonio and is always available on the MDWG website. This is something we will provide at each summer meeting for an up-to-date annual summary of the rangewide status of this species. Since the summer meeting, a revised version of this update was published in the Proceedings of the 2013 Deer/Elk Workshop in order to get this document in a location that can be cited and more easily found by others. The document saw extensive peer-review and the published version is provided at this meeting.

Rangewide Analysis of Mule Deer Survival Data

The MDWG continues to coordinate with researchers to discuss a rangewide analysis of survival data from the thousands of mule deer radiocollars that have been deployed throughout the West in the last 2 decades. These data are valuable to site-specific research projects, but when pooled together over large areas this information could reveal some very interesting trends and relationships not seen at the local level or on one study area. We would like to update and expand the earlier 3-state effort published as Unsworth et al. (1999). This analysis will allow us to evaluate survival through time under varying environmental conditions and also see how survival differs across the landscape. This information could help inform how we survey deer herds and provide important input data for population models. We have had some preliminary discussions with several researchers and Paul Lukacs has developed a proposal to conduct this analysis. This will be a major topic at the next MDWG meeting as we discussed the details of the proposal and work to raise funds to get it accomplished.

MDWG Facebook Page

With the help of Catherine Thagard, we are maintaining a Facebook page for the MDWG in an effort to reach out to a segment of the public we may not reach with publications and our website. The intent is to be able to use this vehicle to distribute our products and information we would like the public to know. For example, we post or share popular mule deer related information to develop a following and so people are paying attention to the page and then provide important information from the MDWG. The type of content we are able to disseminate might be a link to a Fact Sheet or habitat guidelines, or simply abbreviated information on things like antler point restrictions, translocations, urban deer problems, deer/elk competition, etc. Through Facebook comments we are also able to answer questions and engage in dialog. During the last 6 months we have gone from 183 "likes" on the page to 1,789. We are starting to see

more and more traffic and comments. Our posts on the page average 1,600 views per day so we are definitely reaching people we would not otherwise be able to inform.

2015 Deer/Elk Workshop

The 11th Biennial Western States Deer and Elk Workshop will be held May 11 - 14, 2015 at the Coast Hotel and Conference Center in Canmore, Alberta, Canada. This workshop is hosted by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and the Alberta Conservation Association. Registration is open and abstracts can be submitted in the workshop website. This year the themes for papers being solicited are:

- Deer and Elk Conflicts with Humans
- Managing for Deer and Elk Migrations
- Energy Development in Deer and Elk Habitat
- Managing Deer and Elk Harvest as Land Use Changes
- Large Carnivore Predation on Deer and Elk

The last day of the workshop will include a joint paper session with the Western States Black Bear Workshop on large carnivore predation. Please support the attendance of your staff to this important workshop.

<http://deer-elk-bear.com/western-states-deer-and-elk-workshop/about/>

Reseeding Guidance Document

The MDWG is developing a guide to reseeding and restoring mule deer habitat in the 7 ecoregions we have defined. There are opportunities to increase the usefulness of seed mixes for mule deer and other wildlife without jeopardizing soil stabilization needs. This will also help suppliers of seed decide what they should be growing and supplying to agencies. We are coordinating with federal partners who feel this will be very useful. It is a complex topic and will be a major part of our agenda at the next meeting. Our intent is to develop a document that will offer consistent overall guidance while directing on-the-ground practitioners to local experts and resources that have the experience and knowledge in each local area.

Website

The website (www.muledeerworkinggroup.com) has been updated with the rangewide status report, Wallmo Award contact info, Deer/Elk Workshop notice, Fact Sheets, and research priorities.

Mule Deer Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA)

The MDWG is assisting the Mule Deer Foundation to identify areas where match dollars are needed for landscape-scale projects. MDWG representatives are providing the Mule Deer Foundation with at least 3 areas in their state or province that are high priority areas. These areas will provide focal areas to concentrate dollars and efforts to improve mule deer habitat. MDF has completed phase one (pending a few mid-western states) of identifying Conservation Opportunity Areas with advice and recommendations from the MDWG. A complete western map and individual maps have been created and available from MDF. MDF staff are now working with each agency to define a couple of potential projects or other actions needed within each COA. This process will be on-going and be prioritized with continued input from the MDWG. MDF will be working with BLM and the Forest Service to coordinate areas of mule

deer conservation with agency prioritization efforts underway (focal landscapes, sage grouse core areas, etc.). MDF is working to integrate its stewardship contracting agreements with the COA on a pilot basis to create landscape level opportunities on federal lands.

North American Mule Deer Conservation Plan MOU

The North American Mule Deer Conservation Plan MOU between WAFWA and our federal partners was signed in 2008, but expired last summer and is being renewed. The original MOU is still accurate and applicable with no need for substantive changes. A revised MOU was approved at the mid-winter meeting last year, but hiring of a new CFO(s) and other priorities precluded circulating the new MOU and cover letter for signatures. This will be done shortly after this meeting.

Next Meeting

We will hold the next MDWG meeting in conjunction with the Western Hunting and Conservation Expo in Salt Lake City February 18, 2015 (9am – 5pm). Many representatives attend this Expo already and by meeting here we can maximize attendance and minimize costs. Please support travel for your MDWG representative as this is our main working meeting and we need strong attendance there.

Mule Deer Working Group Purpose: “To find solutions to our common mule deer management problems and to optimize cooperative research and management in the Western states and provinces.”